

New Housing Survey Highlights Creative Ways to Promote Affordable Housing

As a follow-up to a similar survey in 2000, the 2002 Housing Survey asked cities and Unincorporated King County to report on the ways they encourage housing choice and affordability. Conducted on behalf of the King County Growth Management Planning Council, this year's survey helps gauge how the cities and County have been doing over the past several years in implementing policies and revising regulations that support affordable housing.

Twenty-eight out of 40 jurisdictions in King County responded to the survey, compared to 25 cities in 2000. The cities that responded represent almost 93% of the County's population.

The survey showed that allowing five-story wood frame construction is gaining popularity. Seattle, Bellevue, Federal Way, Burien, Kenmore and Kirkland have led the way in implementing this regulatory change, while seven other jurisdictions are considering changes to their codes. Previously cities required steel construction for buildings over 4 stories.

Cottage Housing and Transit-Oriented Development are other favored approaches to creating denser, and in some cases, less-costly housing choices. While only four cities have already implemented these types of development, a number of other cities are actively pursuing T.O.D.s and encouraging cottage housing.

Most of the cities surveyed have provisions for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and in some cities those provisions are being expanded. The ADU Homeowner Packet, developed by ARCH (A Regional Coalition for Housing) in conjunction with the City of Seattle, is designed to stimulate the creation of this type of affordable housing.

Nearly half of the jurisdictions in King County are making efforts to streamline

their permitting processes and expedite the review process for design standards, in order to reduce time and cost to developers. Fifteen of the largest jurisdictions in the County have incentive programs for affordable housing development; these include density bonuses, impact and processing fee waivers, reduction of parking requirements, and making surplus property available at below-market rates.

In addition to the measures noted in the chart below, many cities continue to work on their zoning codes and comprehensive plans to increase the amount and diversity of housing choices in their community. By doing so they help meet the goal of the Countywide Planning Policies: that each city will provide a variety of housing choices, and accommodate their fair share of affordable housing.

New and Old Approaches to Encouraging Variety and Affordability of Housing

Type of Approach or Measure	Cities That Have Implemented This Approach	Allow This Type of Approach or Some Variation on it	Considering This Approach
Five Story Wood Frame Construction	Seattle, Bellevue, Burien, Federal Way, Kenmore, Kirkland		Kent, Redmond, Renton, SeaTac, Shoreline, Tukwila and King County
Accessory Dwelling Units	Most Cities		
Reduction or Waiver of Parking Requirement	Seattle (Waives parking for housing serving HH < 30% of median income)	Most Cities	
Cottage Housing	Seattle, Shoreline	Redmond, Kirkland, Issaquah, Snoqualmie	SeaTac, King County, Black Diamond, Burien, Enumclaw, Issaquah, Kent, Renton
Transit-Oriented Development	Redmond (Overlake), Renton (Downtown)		Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Duvall, Federal Way, Issaquah, Kenmore, Kent, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Newcastle, SeaTac, Seattle, Snoqualmie, Tukwila, King County (near Woodinville)
Density Bonuses / Clustering for Affordable Housing	Bellevue, Covington, Federal Way, Kirkland, Mercer Island, Redmond, SeaTac, Seattle, Shoreline, King County	Issaquah	
Percent of Project Must be Affordable	Redmond, Issaquah, Snoqualmie, King County, Federal Way		
Waiver of Impact or Processing Fees	Bellevue, Covington, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond, King County, Snoqualmie	Auburn, Federal Way, Renton	
Expediting Permit Processing	Carnation, Covington, Duvall, Federal Way, Issaquah, Kent, Mercer Island, Redmond, Renton, SeaTac, Seattle, Shoreline, Tukwila, and King County	Burien	Kirkland
Affordable Housing Preservation	Most Cities		